United States
Department of
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Forest Service
Pacific Southwest
Region

Los Padres
National
Forest

Record of Decision
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Land and Resource Management Plan

Los Padres National Forest

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Final Environmental Impact Statement
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Land And Resource Management Plan

Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Kern, and Los Angeles Counties, California

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This Record of Decision documents the selection and approval of a 10-15 year plan for management of the lands and resources of Los Padres National Forest.

Over the last six years the Forest Service has developed a comprehensive plan for the land and resources of Los Padres National Forest. This planning effort includes studies of the lands, resources, and social and economic interests in Los Padres National Forest. Eight different management alternatives were studied in detail. The Final Environmental Impact Statement ("Final EIS") for the Los Padres Land and Resources Management Plan ("Plan" or "Forest Plan") discloses these alternatives and describes the analysis that was done. Please refer to the Final EIS for detailed information on the alternatives.

I. THE DECISION

It is my decision to select Alternative I (Selected).

Alternative I as described in the Final EIS and the Plan is a modified version of Alternative I disclosed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("Draft EIS") issued in July 1986. The modifications are the product of both further analysis and of information and opinion contained in the more than 1800 public responses to the draft documents. The Plan emphasizes services and commodities in response to local and regional needs. Integrated multiple-use management of Wilderness, watershed and fire, plant communities, wildlife habitat, recreation, scenery, and a variety of land uses constitute the Plan's fundamental architecture.

The Plan provides the direction and information necessary to achieve its goals; therefore, I am approving the Los Padres National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The Los Padres Forest, about 1,750,000 acres occupies a unique position among all National Forests in California. The Forest occupies a major portion of the Pacific coastal mountain ranges and extends from the west boundary of Los Angeles County to mid-Monterey County on the north (about 220 miles). The Forest spans multiple environments ranging from the intertidal zone of the Big Sur coast to the semi-desert of the Cuyama Badlands to the coniferous Forests of Mt. Pinos. This varied environment provides an extremely wide diversity of plant communities and wildlife habitat epitomized by 28 sensitive plant species, the southernmost stand of coast redwood and the Sespe Condor Sanctuary.

Los Padres Forest is largely unroaded in character (nearly 70%) which is one of its greatest assets. Over 90% of the Forest is classified as untouched in terms of visual quality. The Forest provides a scenic backdrop for several areas, including the internationally known Big Sur coast and the communities of Ojai, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo. These areas are recognized in the Plan by specific management direction.

Los Padres National Forest was originally established to protect vital Forest watersheds and adjacent communities from the threat of wildfires. This remains our principle mission today. High temperatures, "Santa Ana" (sundowner) type winds, frequent low humidities, steep topography, large unroaded areas, and continuous stands of decadent chaparral combine to make Los Padres one of the most wildfire prone Forests in the entire National Forest System. The Forest has a history of catastrophic wildfires because of these conditions. Two of the largest wildfires in the State of California have occurred on the Los Padres and the average annual acreage burned by wildfire is in excess of 20,000 acres. The importance of reducing these significant impacts in the long term, through the use of prescribed fire, is a major feature of this plan.

Los Padres National Forest, situated between Los Angeles Basin and the San Francisco Bay Area, provides a wide range of recreation activities for this largely urban population. This increasingly diverse population finds that the recreational opportunities and scenery of Los Padres provide both rest and respite from the pressures of urban living. In response to this need general forest recreation is a major focus of the Plan.

The Forest is alone among California Forests in the production of commercial quantities of oil and gas. The Sespe oilfield has produced oil since 1887 and consists of approximately 250 wells, of which about 50% are on National Forest lands.

The Forest's timber program emphasizes timber stand improvement and reforestation to promote a healthy Forest for visual and general Forest recreation values. There is very little commercial harvest of timber from this Forest (.1% in the California Region) and most of it is sold for firewood.

In making my decision I have reviewed the environmental consequences of the Plan and the alternatives which are disclosed in the Final EIS. I gave particular attention to public comments presented in Appendix A of the Final EIS. I have also reviewed the public issues and management concerns identified during the scoping process for this Plan (Chapter 1 of the Final EIS). Alternative I (Preferred) of the Draft EIS was modified as a result of public comment. Those changes are reflected in the version of Alternative I (Selected) described in the Final EIS and Final Forest Plan.

The EIS and Plan were developed under the implementing regulations of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219 (36 CFR 219) published in 47 FR 43026, September 30, 1982. The planning actions described in 36 CFR 219.12(b) through (k) have been completed and are documented. Also followed were the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1500-1508). In addition, the Plan preparation reflects other laws and regulations and adherence to the Regional Guide for the Pacific Southwest Region.

The principal components of the Plan are:

- 1. The desired condition of the Forest in the future as a result of implementing Alternative I (Chapter 4 of Plan).
- 2. Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines which direct Forest management to achieve or maintain specified conditions for resources in all Management Areas, regardless of the specific Management Area Prescription (Chapter 4 of Plan). These Standards and Guidelines will play an important and central role in design of individual projects.
- 3. Management Area Prescriptions, which are sets of management practices applying to specific Management Areas in order to attain specific objectives (Chapter 4 of Plan). The Management Area Prescriptions also establish the emphasis for the individual Management Areas.
- 4. Monitoring plan and evaluation requirements to determine how well objectives and standards have been applied (Chapter 5 of Plan).

As provided in 36 CFR 219.10 this decision will remain in effect until the Plan is revised, which is expected to be in 10-15 years. There is no assurance, however, that the goals will be achieved within the time frame of the Plan. Achievement can be influenced by many factors including budget levels, size of workforce, changes in laws and regulations, national and local economic factors, and the dynamic natural processes and physical factors affecting the Forest. In the Final EIS the effects of alternative choices are projected 40 years beyond the planning period for the sake of analyzing long-term effects. Opportunities, problems, or conflicts may arise in managing the Forest which were unforeseen during Plan development. When such factors arise, the Plan can be adjusted.

The Plan provides an "umbrella" of broad guidance and strategy for management of the Forest's land and resources. In most instances the Forest Plan does not provide site-specific, project level decisions. Future projects would be developed or "tiered" from the Plan's direction. Thus, the Forest Plan is programmatic in scope.

In order to fully implement the Plan (including activities, goods and services, mitigation, and monitoring), the Plan projects a need for a funding increase of approximately 20 percent over the 1982 base year, or a total of $18.5 million per year in the first decade. (See Appendix L of the FEIS) Actual annual budgets affect the rate of implementation of the Plan and directly affect the work done in any given period. A change in the implementation schedule as a result of a change in the budget is not a significant amendment unless the changes significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services projected under planned proposals as compared to those projected under actual appropriations. In that event, revision or significant amendment to the Plan may be warranted. The need for revision or amendment can only be determined as the Plan is implemented and monitored.

A summary of the major thrusts of this Plan and my decision follows.

Watershed Protection

The Plan contains considerable direction designed to ensure protection and improvement of watersheds. The foremost element in the strategy for watershed protection is a program of fuels management in chaparral primarily through prescribed fire. Prescribed fire can reduce the erosion and water quality impacts associated with chaparral wildfire. Over time the fuels management portion of the total fire budget will increase. The current level of prescribed burning averages about 8,000 acres each year; the Plan proposes an average of 25,000 acres treated yearly under prescription. Some of this burning will take place in Wilderness areas.

Other elements in the strategy for watershed protection include provisions for inventory and rehabilitation of disturbed or damaged watersheds; provisions for developing water quality baseline data and for water quality monitoring; and a set of Standards and Guidelines that will be used in the design and implementation of projects to protect water quality.

Diversity of Ecosystems

The Plan provides for diversity in ecosystems through management direction and through planned or recommended allocation of land.

Management direction that will help preserve overall ecosystem diversity includes prescribed fire, timber stand improvement, reforestation, riparian area management, and management of the visual resource. Prescribed fire improves age class and successional stage diversity in chaparral and maintains or improves the richness of fire-following species. Moreover, prescribed burning lessens the risk of crown fires in forested stands adjacent to chaparral. Timber stand improvement aids health and vigor of conifers through maintaining appropriate stocking levels and size class distribution and by reducing the potential for crown fires. Reforestation will restock formerly forested areas and will augment natural regeneration. In addition, a net increase of less than one road mile per year of Forest Development Roads is expected in the first decade. Standards have been developed to guide the maintenance and enhancement of riparian habitats Forest-wide.

Maintenance of visual quality is considered important throughout the Forest. This is particularly true along the Big Sur coast and adjacent to urban areas where visual resources are the focus of management direction.

Land allocations which will help preserve ecosystem diversity include Wilderness; Wild and Scenic Rivers; Research Natural Areas; Botanical, Cultural, and Geologic Areas; and National Natural Landmarks.

The existing Wildernesses (412,912 acres) and recommended Wildernesses (253,866 acres) will provide a set of large biogeographic areas across Los Padres National Forest. Four outstanding areas are recommended for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. As they are currently mapped, the recommended areas are manageable, have relatively few conflicts with other uses of the Forest, and are supported by the majority of the commenting public. Should Congress establish the additions recommended in the Forest Plan, 38 percent of Los Padres National Forest will be Wilderness.

-The recommended Garcia Wilderness is a 10,306-acre unit situated east of San Luis Obispo at the southern end of the Santa Lucia Mountains. The area is rugged, being dominated by steep terrain along Garcia Ridge and adjacent canyons. Dense chaparral and lush riparian habitat are characteristic of the recommended Garcia Wilderness. Solitude and serenity can be found but such opportunity is reduced by the sights and sounds of civilization detectable from Garcia Ridge. Overall the area has high wilderness values. Public comment strongly supports the Garcia Wilderness as it is currently delineated

-The recommended La Brea addition to the San Rafael Wilderness is a 16,516-acre parcel situated east of Santa Maria in the Sisquoc Canyon at the west boundary of the San Rafael Wilderness. The area is extremely rugged, being dissected by a number of steep canyons. Dense chaparral is characteristic of the La Brea Addition. Current recreational use is low. A number of sites of historic interest are present. Natural integrity is high, as is the opportunity for solitude and challenging primitive recreation. Expressed public opinion supports recommendation of the La Brea Wilderness. The area is considered a logical addition to the San Rafael Wilderness.

-The recommended Matilija Wilderness is a 30,107-acre parcel situated northwest of Ojai in the Matilija watershed. The area consists of broken terrain and spectacular rock outcrops on the slopes of steep canyons. Prior to the 1985 Wheeler Fire, the Matilija Wilderness was covered by dense chaparral vegetation. Current recreational use is low, which is thought to be an after-effect of the 1985 fire. The area supported abundant and diverse wildlife prior to the fire. Although such is not the case currently, the situation is expected to improve as the area recovers. The natural integrity of much of the area remains undisturbed and there are numerous opportunities for solitude and challenging primitive recreation. Overall wilderness character is high. Considerable local support has been expressed for establishment of a Matilija Wilderness.

-The recommended Sespe Wilderness is a 197,047-acre expanse situated astride the Sespe watershed north of Fillmore and Santa Paula. The area is exceptionally diverse consisting of rugged mountain and

valley terrain with extremely steep and precipitous topography. Coniferous forest is typical of higher elevations while chaparral dominates slopes. Even though recreation use is high, opportunity for solitude and isolated primitive recreation experience is very high. Overall wilderness character is very high, a fact given added importance by the area's proximity to southern California urban areas. Public support for the Sespe Wilderness is high despite the need to trade off oil and gas potential, water development potential, and established OHV use on the Johnston Ridge trail.

The Plan also recommends that certain land areas receive special management. These land areas are termed "Special Interest Areas." The protective management they will receive will help preserve ecosystem diversity.

-Wild or Scenic River status is recommended for portions of the Big Sur (14.4 mi), Sisquoc (31 mi), and Sespe (28.5 mi) Rivers. Multiagency study of Wild River status for the Little Sur River is recommended.

-Five Research Natural Areas are recommended: American Canyon (1500 ac), San Emigdio Mesa (1200 ac), Wagon Caves (150 ac), Black Butte (2955 ac), and Ventana Cones (1400 ac). Two others are the subject of continuing study: San Rafael Mtn. (1300 ac) and Big Pine Mtn. (100 ac). The Cone Peak Gradient was recently established as a RNA (2955 ac).

-Five Botanical Areas are added: Alder Creek (75 ac), Lion Den Spring (85 ac), Mt. Pinos Summit (510 ac), Southern Redwood (10 ac), and Dry Lakes Ridge (450 ac). They will join the existing Cuesta Botanical Area (1300 ac).

-Quatal Canyon (2536 ac) is added as a Geologic Special Interest Area and is recommended as a National Natural Landmark.

-The Sierra Madre Ridge is added as a Cultural Resource Special Interest Area (5772 ac).

-The Cone Peak-Limekiln Creek area is recommended as a National Natural Landmark (2955 ac); it partially overlaps the existing California Coast Ranges Biosphere Reserve (15,933 ac).

Productivity and Diversity of Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat

Maintaining and improving the productivity and diversity of wildlife habitat is a major emphasis of the Forest Plan. Forest-wide standards and guidelines and fisheries and wildlife management programs are the major tools the Forest will use toward that end.

The Forest-wide standards and guidelines for fish and wildlife are built around three key ideas: maintenance of viable populations of all species, maintenance and enhancement of riparian habitats, and recovery of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.

Program activities that benefit wildlife habitat diversity and productivity include chaparral management, primarily prescribed fire; development of water sources, creation of openings, planting of mixed plant species, and maintenance or retention of needed snags and dead and down woody material. Prescribed burning improves wildlife habitat in chaparral by increasing age class diversity, the amount of edge, and the number of openings.

Management of populations of threatened and endangered species, along with reintroductions of native species no longer present on the Forest ("extirpated"), will also be emphasized. Recovery efforts will be emphasized for the California Condor and Peregrine Falcon. Tule Elk and Nelson Big Horn Sheep will continue to be reintroduced. Direction is also provided for the protection of the Southern Spotted Owl.

Projects designed to improve fisheries habitat and productivity will concentrate on the anadromous steelhead fishery, primarily in Monterey County. These projects include installation of instream structures to create needed pools or collect spawning gravels, removal of barriers to fish passage, planting of riparian overstory to reduce instream temperatures, and control or removal of other activities which are causing degradation of fishery productivity. Prescribed burning will also enhance the timing, quality, and amount of water in streams.

Diversity of Recreation Opportunity

The Plan responds to public demand for a variety of recreation opportunities. The overall emphasis is toward general forest recreation. Opportunities of this type typically do not involve developed facilities or motor vehicles, but do involve roads and trails and undeveloped forest. Hiking, viewing scenery, hunting, and cross-country skiing are examples of general forest recreation. The large amount of Wilderness acreage on Los Padres, substantially increased by the Plan, will be a focus of much of this type of general forest recreation. The Plan provides the framework for developing additional trails and improvements which will enhance general forest recreation. The prescribed burning program is expected to reduce the amount of Forest land subject to seasonal fire closure; this, in turn, should enhance hunting and other general forest recreation opportunities in the future. Somewhat less emphasis is placed on recreation opportunities which depend on developed facilities. Developed facilities include campgrounds, picnic areas, and observation sites. In the first ten years the backlog of recreation sites in need of rehabilitation will be corrected. Additional capacity will be developed, primarily in day-use facilities. The Plan provides for a high level of management of developed facilities which receive heavy to moderate

use, including facilities situated along the Big Sur coast.

General forest and developed recreation both will occur in a natural-appearing setting since visual resources are emphasized in many areas of the Forest, including the Big Sur coast.

Diversity of Land Uses

Continuation of a variety of land uses is envisioned in the Forest Plan. Emphasis will be on those land uses which are mandated or not available off-Forest.

Mandated activities include minerals development. Total acreage available for mineral leasing decreases 28 percent from the current level, while acreage available for locatable mineral activities decreases 25 percent.

This Plan provides guidelines for the processing of Oil and Gas lease applications. An Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared to assess all pending oil and gas lease applications. Subsequent environmental documents relating to oil and gas lease applications will be tiered from this Environmental Impact Statement and the Plan.

The Plan also provides guidelines for the processing of locatable mineral "operating plans". It specifically calls for the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements for Pico Blanco and Pine Mountain when operating plans are submitted.

The Plan responds to public demand for fuelwood by providing an average of 6400 cords yearly during the first ten years and an average of 5080 cords yearly thereafter. In comparison, current average demand is 3400 cords yearly. Most of the future demand will be met through thinning projects designed to improve overstocked timber stands.

The Plan responds to demand for target shooting opportunities by leaving most areas open to this activity. However certain areas totalling approximately 50,000 acres do have shooting restrictions. These areas include but are not limited to Cuesta Ridge, Camino Cielo Ridge, residential areas, and all recreation areas. In addition, the Forest has the capability to add other restricted areas in order to reduce safety hazards and ensure compatibility with Management Area objectives. Such restrictions will be implemented case-by-case as needed with public involvement. Grazing will be maintained at current levels during the first ten years. Current grazing ranges between 43,000 and 49,000 Animal Unit Months (AUM). The forage source includes currently available grazing lands as well as temporary forage produced by prescribed burning. Demand in later years will be considered in evaluating the need to increase grazing capacity in existing allotments (up to 55,000 Animal Unit Months).

The Plan establishes Standards and Guidelines which govern utility rights-of-way corridors and electronic sites. No utility corridors are specifically provided for in the Plan. Sanitary landfills will only be permitted when suitable sites cannot be located elsewhere on non-Forest lands. Other proposed land uses will be evaluated in terms of overall suitability for Forest lands, compatibility with Management Area objectives, and environmental consequences.

II. ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Planning Issues

Planning issues identified by the public and the Forest Service defined the scope of the EIS and shaped the Forest Plan.

In the very early stages of planning, the public was invited through letters, newspaper notices, Federal Register notices, and personal contact to participate in scoping the draft EIS and draft Forest Plan. Considerable attention was given to notifying affected or potentially concerned Federal, California, and local government agencies, Native Americans, and private landowners. Public meetings were held throughout California between October 1979 and January 1980 including 13 meetings near Los Padres National Forest. Over 230 comments were received from individuals, organizations, and governmental agencies during this initial scoping.

Seventeen planning issues were identified for the "draft" phase of planning on Los Padres National Forest:

- How can Los Padres National Forest best manage activities that might degrade air quality?
- How can the Forest best manage and protect surface resources to respond to both national mineral and energy needs and environmental concerns?
- How should the Forest soil resource be protected or enhanced and problem areas stabilized?
- How should the Forest's watersheds be managed to ensure adequate quantity and quality of water?
- How intensely and by what methods should the Forest vegetation be managed?
- What kinds and amounts of fish and wildlife habitats are needed, and what are appropriate means for providing them?
- How can the Forest best maintain, enhance, and protect threatened and endangered species and their critical habitats, and sensitive species (listed by the Forest Service)?
- How should Los Padres National Forest manage and use rangelands?

- How can the Forest effectively carry out its fire management responsibilities to protect life and property and to enhance resource values?
- What kinds, amounts, and locations of recreation opportunities should be emphasized?
- Which areas in Los Padres National Forest should be designated as Special Areas?
- How should designated Wilderness be managed?
- How should Further Planning Areas be allocated for management?
- How can the Forest protect and interpret cultural resource properties and still provide for other resource uses?
- What landownership adjustments should be made and which public rights-of-way should be acquired in Los Padres National Forest?
- How should Los Padres National Forest allocate land for special uses and public utilities?
- How shall the visual resources of the Forest be managed?

Upon completion of the Draft EIS and Draft Forest Plan, formal Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register. Availability also was announced by area news media and by letters to over 3500 participants in the planning process. Nine public meetings and two noticed public hearings were held during the 120-day comment period (July 1-October 31, 1987).

No new significant planning issues were identified from public comment on the Draft Forest Plan and Draft EIS. Detailed discussion of the seventeen planning issues is contained in Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan and Appendix A of the Final EIS. Table 2.7-1 of the Final EIS summarizes the ways in which the individual alternatives respond to the planning issues.

Alternatives

The Los Padres alternative development process produced eight different alternatives in the Draft EIS. These alternatives ranged from more commodity outputs (grazing, minerals, fuelwood, etc.) with little or no increase in Wilderness to no increases in commodity outputs and large increases in Wilderness.

Most public comments made reference to and suggested ways to improve Alternative I. Comparatively, few comments received related to the other alternatives. Analysis of public comments did not substantiate a need to develop any new alternatives. Consequently, the range of alternatives considered and analyzed in the Final EIS are the same alternatives considered in the Draft EIS, except Alternative I. Alternative I was modified to be responsive to public comments by: a) Increasing acreage recommended for Wilderness b) Increasing total miles of stream recommended for Wild & Scenic River Status. c) Maintaining current level of grazing during the next 10 years. d) Providing more visible direction related to mineral exploration or development on the Forest and recommends a significant portion of the Big Sur Coast for mineral withdrawal. e) Providing more specific direction to resolve user conflicts between off - highway vehicles use and Wilderness at Johnson Ridge and Garcia Ridge and recognizing the State's OHV Trails Plan.

Table 1
Key Comparisons

	Alternatives							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Grazing (M AUMs)	49.0	47.7	46.8	73.0	44.7	48.0	53.4	83.5
Oil and Gas (M acres of high potential)	137	157	118	129	132	132	139	157
Fuelwood (M cords)	6.4	3.4	5.4	5.7	2.5	5.3	10.0	6.4
Prescribed burning M acres)	25	8	25	25	11	25	25	25
Wilderness (M acres)	667	413	1104	902	757	696	565	413
Wild and Scenic Rivers (Miles)	73.9	38.4	64.4	64.4	64.4	64.4	64.4	0

All alternatives include common Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines to assure a sound foundation for each alternative. Table 1 is designed to illustrate the major differences between the eight alternatives considered in the Final EIS. Please refer to Chapter 2 of the Final EIS for a complete description and analysis of the eight alternatives.

Alternative I (Selected) emphasizes increasing goods and services in response to local and regional needs.

Alternative II represents continuation of current (1982) management

Alternative III provides the greatest amount of manageable Wilderness and emphasizes enhancement of "amenity" resources, including fish and wildlife, general forest recreation, visual resources, and cultural resources.

Alternative IV responds to a need for increased commodity production while designating a substantial portion of the Forest as Wilderness. This is accomplished by intensely managing the non-Wilderness lands.

Alternative V responds to national needs reflected by a low budget, availability of lands suspected to have high oil and gas potential, and a special focus on the Big Sur vicinity.

Alternative VI emphasizes the management of fish and wildlife, water, and general forest recreation. Emphasis is similar to Alternative III but without a large increase in Wilderness acres.

Alternative VII responds to the 1980 RPA (Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974) targets assigned to the Forest.

Alternative VIII emphasizes production of commodities which return income to the government (including oil and gas, grazing, developed recreation, and fuelwood)

III. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This section describes the basis for selecting Alternative I as the foundation for the Plan. These considerations were derived from the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified through the initial planning process, as well as from public comments and further analysis by the Forest on the Draft EIS and Draft Forest Plan.

No single factor determined this decision. Rather, using professional judgement and experience, many factors were considered and weighed in making the selection. The Plan sets direction that results in the greatest overall long-term benefit to the public based on consideration of all factors, including: protection of resources; expressed public desire; our multiple-use mandate; monetary and nonmonetary costs and benefits; land capability; and advice and suggestions from other agencies, organizations, and experienced Forest officers. A concept which expresses this balance is Net Public Benefit (NPB). Net Public Benefit includes the values of both quantifiable and non-quantifiable benefits, as well as the associated costs.

In the following sections, I discuss in detail the factors influencing my decision. In the section "Summary of Reasons for Selecting Plan," I discuss briefly the reasons for my decision to select Alternative I as the basis for the Forest Plan and to approve the Forest Plan.

Response to Public Comments

Los Padres National Forest received 1800 responses to the Draft Forest Plan and Draft EIS; the 1800 responses contained over 8500 separate comments. A summary of both the public response to the Draft Forest Plan and the Forest's resolution of public responses may be found in Appendix A of the Final EIS.

The public review and comment process is a key part of the planning effort and has yielded a sense of the wide range of public opinion on many planning issues. It shows areas of agreement, as well as areas of disgreement. In general the comments indicate broad public support for the basic outline of the Draft Plan although many of the comments suggest going even further in certain directions. Few of the comments reflect outright opposition to changes the Plan would bring to Los Padres. The comments include suggested changes and corrections and identification of oversights.

The Forest received comments from people with many different interests often expressing conflicting views. Many people are concerned about the effects of "profit-oriented" uses of the National Forest such as mining and grazing. A number of letters include a statement to the effect that Los Padres National Forest should be managed "to ensure the preservation of the natural forest ecosystem for the longterm," with all uses of forest resources subordinated to this goal. Others stress the importance of preserving and enhancing biological diversity, maintaining open space, and providing clean air and water. Many respondents to the Draft Plan believe strongly in the "multiple use" philosophy and feel that the resources of the Forest should be used wisely to benefit local communities and the nation. They feel that forest management should provide for a fair balance of uses.

In the following section I discuss the way the Plan handles major subjects that emerged during the public comment period. These major subjects overlap but do not replicate the initial set of issues and concerns developed during the scoping process in 1980. The major subjects resulting from Draft Forest Plan public involvement are Wilderness Area Recom-

mendations, Wild and Scenic River Recommendations, Off-Highway Vehicle Use (OHV), and Mineral Development in the Big Sur Coastal Zone.

Wilderness Area Recommendations

In 1979 the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) identified thirty nine unroaded areas on Los Padres. The 1984 California Wilderness Bill designated four of these areas as Wilderness (Dick Smith, Machnesna Mtn, Church Creek addition to the Ventana Wilderness, and Manzana addition to the San Rafael Wilderness), released sixteen areas for a variety of multiple-use purposes, and relegated the remaining nineteen areas to Further Planning. One of the purposes of this EIS is to resolve the Further Planning status for each of the remaining nineteen unroaded areas by recommending them either for Wilderness or multiple-use management.

While most respondents to the Plan addressed remarks to additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System, many also shared their ideas about the general concept of Wilderness. Reasons given in support of Wilderness include protection of plants and animals; preservation for future generations; locking out mineral development, preventing OHV's and other "consumptive uses"; and the need to provide respite from Southern California's urban pressure. Some people feel that the entire Forest should be designated Wilderness. Opponents to additional Wilderness are concerned that we have enough Wilderness already, that "closing" more areas benefits only an elite few and that, in some cases, Wilderness designation ties up valuable resources such as oil and gas and other minerals. Restricted access for firefighters and their equipment is another concern.

All these comments were considered in my recommendation for a substantial increase in Wilderness acreage. My recommendation of 253,886 acres for Wilderness, includes an additional 60,400 acres beyond the 193,486 acres recommended in the Draft Forest Plan.

The Final Plan makes the following Wilderness recommendations:

Proposed Wilderness	Recommended Acres
Sespe	197,047
Garcia Mountain	10,306
Matilija	30,017
La Brea	16,516
TOTAL	253,886

Further Planning Areas Recommended For Wilderness

The following areas identified in the California Wilderness Bill as Further Planning Areas are recommended for Wilderness. For a more complete discussion of these areas see Appendix C of the Final EIS.

Proposed Garcia Wilderness

The Forest heard from many people who are in disagreement with the Garcia Wilderness proposal because of its negative impact on OHV opportunities in the area, particularly the Garcia Ridge route utilized during the Hi Mountain Motorcycle Enduro. In addition to the loss of a traditional route, many are concerned that closure of existing OHV trails will concentrate use in a smaller area, thereby contributing to unnecessary environmental damage. Most who disagreed with the Draft Plan proposal recommended a boundary change which would exclude the Garcia Ridge route from Wilderness. On the other side of the issue were a number of responses supporting the Draft Plan proposal or recommending an expanded Wilderness. Reasons given included protection of unique scenic, recreational and botanical values and the exclusion of OHVs.

This controversy is addressed in the Plan through adjustment of the northern Wilderness boundary to exclude the OHV route from the proposed Wilderness. This adjustment would allow limited use of the existing jeep road for up to three organized events annually subject to securing necessary right-of-way across nearby private lands. This resolution considers the interests of OHV users and supporters of the Garcia Wilderness since limited OHV use opportunity is maintained while most of the recommended Garcia Wilderness is retained. The adjusted area totals 10,306 acres.

That portion of the unroaded area not recommended for Wilderness will be managed with an emphasis on watershed and wildlife management.

Proposed Sespe Wilderness

More respondents addressed the Sespe Wilderness proposal (originally termed "Sespe-Frazier Wilderness") than any other aspect of the Draft Forest Plan. Their input demonstrated considerable support for Wilderness designation but many respondents asked that the Forest Service recommendation be expanded to include other areas. Reasons given for supporting Wilderness designation included the need for protecting the unique character of the area from commercial exploitation and development, the preservation of condor and other Threatened and Endangered species habitat, the preclusion of OHVs, and general requests for "maximum Wilderness". Some people opposed Wilderness designation for the Sespe area outright, primarily due to preclusion of future water developments, restrictions on access, and limitations on fire suppression activities. Others suggested boundary adjustments be made to exclude high oil and gas potential areas, important water resources, and key trails. Many letters questioned the appropriateness of including private lands in the Mutau Flats area in Wilderness. Another issue which

generated numerous comments, pro and con, had to do with traditional OHV access to the Johnston Ridge Trail and Sespe Hot Springs area.

In response to public concern, the proposed Sespe Wilderness has been substantially increased in size. This acreage is situated in several areas around the boundary of the original proposed Wilderness. The largest addition is at the western end of the original area, including the slopes of Pine Mountain and the Potrero John vicinity. The remainder of the addition is in Lion Canyon, upper Santa Paula Canyon, Devil's Potrero, and Ruby Canyon areas. The Johnston Ridge Trail will be closed to OHV use since there is no reasonable way to accommodate both the objectives of Wilderness and motorized access to Sespe Hot Springs. The Plan responds to the issue of Mutau Flat private lands through redesign of the Wilderness boundary to exclude the land in question and to situate the boundary on a major watershed divide. The final recommended Sespe Wilderness is 197,047 acres.

Those portions of the unroaded area not recommended for Wilderness will be managed for a variety of multiple-use purposes, particularly general forest recreation, wildlife and watershed management. General forest recreation provides for OHV activities in the Alamo-Lockwood area. A variety of non-motorized recreation activities will occur on the remainder of the area.

Proposed Matilija Wilderness

The Forest heard from few people opposed to the proposed 30,017-acre Matilija Wilderness. Those who did were mostly opposed to any additional Wilderness in general. In contrast, there was strong public support for the Wilderness recommendation.

That portion of the unroaded area not recommended for wilderness will be managed with an emphasis on watershed and visual resource management. The final recommended Matilija Wilderness is 30,017 acres.

Proposed La Brea Addition to the San Rafael Wilderness

As with the Matilija area the Forest heard from few people opposed to the proposed 16,516-acre La Brea Addition to the San Rafael Wilderness. Those who did were mostly opposed to any additional Wildernessin general. In contrast, there was strong public support for the Wilderness addition with some people supporting expansion of the proposed addition. No information was submitted, however, that would lead me to change my recommendation.

That portion of the unroaded area not recommended for Wilderness will be managed with an emphasis on general forest recreation and watershed management, with recreation opportunities primarily in the non-motorized class. Prescribed fire is used to protect soil and watershed resources. The final recommended addition to the San Rafael Wilderness is 16,516 acres.

Further Planning Areas Not Recommended For Wilderness

The following areas identified in the California Wilderness Bill as Further Planning Areas are not recommended for Wilderness. No information from the public comments led me to change my recommendaton for these areas. Management direction for each of these areas has been summarized below. For a more complete discussion see Appendix C of the Final EIS.

Black Butte

Management of this area will emphasize wildlife and watershed management. Wildlife habitat work occurs primarily in areas with user access and slopes less than sixty percent. Prescribed burning is the main management tool to protect soil and water resources from wildfire.

Bear Mountain and Bear Canyon

Several interest groups and individuals particularly supported the Bear Canyon area for Wilderness. Those opposed were primarily concerned that such designation would restrict military training exercises. There was some concern related to oil and gas potential of both areas.

The emphasis for both areas is watershed management with prescribed burning being used to protect soil and water resources from wildfire.

Black Mountain and La Panza

The emphasis for both areas remains general forest recreation, providing a range of recreation opportunities including the use of OHV's on designated routes, and wildlife management. Wildlife habitat enhancement is focused on areas with user access and slopes less than sixty percent. Management of the Black Mountain Wild Horse herd is emphasized within the Black Mountain area.

Los Machos Hills, Big Rocks and Stanley Mountain

The emphasis for all three areas remains general forest recreation, providing a range of recreation opportunities including the use of OHV's on designated routes, and on grazing. Range capacity may increase in the long term on existing allotments as a result of prescribed fire.

Horseshoe Springs

The emphasis for this area is on watershed and wildlife management. Prescribed burning is the main management tool to protect soil and water resources from wildfire. Wildlife habitat work occurs primarily in areas with user access and slopes less than sixty percent.

Diablo and Dry Lakes

The emphasis for the Diablo area and the western portion of Dry Lakes is on non-roaded general forest recreation, wildlife and water yield management. Water yield projects will be designed to increase available water to local reservoirs. Wildlife projects would focus on improving the chaparral habitat of both game and non-game species. The eastern portion of the Dry Lakes area emphasizes day-use recreation and visual quality with landscapes managed to maintain a natural appearing condition.

Sawmill-Badlands

Some respondents expressed support for a 60,000-acre Wilderness. Opposition to this proposal cannot be gauged since the area was not proposed for Wilderness in the Draft Plan.

Current uses in the area include minerals, grazing, and OHV use. Oil and gas potential is estimated to be low to moderate and there are several mining claims. The western portion contains grazing allotments with associated structural improvements. A number of OHV routes cross the area.

Several unique natural resource areas occur within the area and are recognized in the Plan by Special Interest Area designation. These include the Mount Pinos Botanical Area, the San Emigdio Mesa Research Natural Area and the Quatal Geologic Area.

This area provides a variety of recreation and land use opportunities. My decision recognizes the importance of maintaining these opportunities especially considering a recommended 197,047-acre Sespe Wilderness nearby.

Although the Sawmill-Badlands area is within several management areas, the Forest intends to administer the area focusing on visitor interpretation and dispersed recreation. More specifically, management will emphasize the natural attractions of the area with a particular focus on the educational aspects of the new Botanic, Geological and Research Natural Areas and other natural features. A wide range of recreation activities will be provided, primarily in a day use setting compatable with maintaining wildlife, scenic, and watershed values. This will retain a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities while providing a wide range of multiple-use opportunities.

Antimony and Quatal

The emphasis for these areas is general forest recreation. A wide range of recreation activities including the use of off-highway vehicles on designated routes will continue to be available.

Little Pine

The management emphasis for this small area, seperated by an administrative access jeep road from the San Rafael Wilderness, is general forest recreation and wildlife and watershed management.

Released Areas

As mentioned previously, sixteen areas were released by the California Wilderness Act to be managed for a variety of multiple-use purposes. The primary multiple-use options for these areas are watershed management, grazing, general forest recreation and wildlife management. Although a number of public comments referred to these areas, particularly the Silver Peak and Chalk Peak areas, I have received no information that would lead me to recommend any of these areas for Wilderness. Chalk Peak will be managed with an emphasis on wildlife and watershed management, primarily through the use of prescribed burning. Silver Peak, within the Coastal Zone, will be managed with an emphasis on visual resource management and recreation. Three Botanical Areas would also be established within this area.

Wild And Scenic River Recommendations

The Draft Plan recommended the inclusion of three streams in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System: Big Sur River (7.4 miles); Sisquoc River (31.0 miles); and Sespe Creek (26.0 miles). The Draft Plan also examined Piru Creek but determined it ineligible for inclusion. These four streams are the only ones within Los Padres listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory developed by the U.S. Department of Interior in 1981.

Public comment on Wild and Scenic Rivers focused primarily on additions to the set of recommendations made in the Draft Plan. The reasons most often cited were resource protection and prohibiting such uses as dams or OHVs.

The Final Plan that I am adopting recommends an additional 9.5 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers beyond the 64.4 miles recommended in the Draft Plan.

River	Miles recommended
Big Sur	14.4
Sisquoc	31.0
Sespe	28.5
Total	73.9

Proposed Big Sur River

The Draft Forest Plan recommended that the main fork of the Big Sur River (7.4 miles), extending from the confluence of the North and South Forks to the State Parks boundary, be added to the Wild and Scenic River System. The North and South Forks are entirely on National Forest land and are also entirely within the Ventana Wilderness. The portion extending from State Parks land downstream to the Forest boundary is situated entirely on private land and is not included on the original list of candidate streams analyzed in the Draft EIS. Outstandingly remarkable features of the Big Sur River include abundant, rapid, flowing water, with pools, springs, and an occas-

sional waterfall; interesting landforms; diverse tree canopy with redwoods; and a combination of scenic features uncommon in Southern California. The area also offers outstanding opportunities for Wilderness-related recreation.

Public comment strongly supported inclusion of the North and South Forks in the Forest's final recommendation. Reasons given include protection of wildlife habitat and viewshed, and consistency with the Big Sur Local Coastal Plan.

The Plan I am adopting recommends the addition of the North and South Forks to the Big Sur Wild and Scenic River (7 miles), for a total of 14.4 miles; however, the private land portion downstream of the State Park is not included. This adjustment is responsive to public concern and also avoids a locally troublesome assumption of Federal authority over private land.

Proposed Sespe Creek

The Draft Plan recommends Wild River status for Segment 3, that portion of Sespe Creek extending from Bear Canyon to Devil's Gate. Segment 1, extending from the headwaters to Chorro Grande Canyon, does not meet criteria for Wild or Scenic recommendation; therefore, the Draft Plan did not advance its recommendation. Segment 2, extending from Chorro Grande to Bear Canyon, is eligible for Scenic River designation but was not recommended in the Draft Plan.

The Draft Forest Plan recommended Wild River designation for a 26 mile segment of Sespe Creek. Widespread support was expressed by the general public for this recommendation. However, a concern was also expressed that such designation would preclude future development of water resources considered essential to the future of Ventura County. Some respondents want additional segments included in the recommendation; others want a Sespe Creek unencumbered by Wild or Scenic status. Central to the water development side of the issue are two potential reservoir sites: the Topa Topa site, situated near Alder Creek, and the Cold Springs site, situated along Highway 33 near Beaver Campground.

Outstandingly remarkable features include steep narrow gorges, picturesque pools, cascading riffels and outstanding views of geologic formations. It also passes through the Sespe Condor Sanctuary and has been designated by the State as a native trout stream.

The Forest Plan that I am adopting considers the expressed desire for a longer Wild and Scenic River and the expressed local need to retain the option to develop water resources. The Plan extends the Wild River recommendation upstream to Trout Creek, providing a total of 28.5 miles of Wild River. No special designation is recommended for the remainder of Sespe Creek. This recommendation would preclude development of a reservoir at the Topa Topa site but would maintain the option for water development of the Cold Springs site on the upper Sespe.

Proposed Sisquoc River

The Draft Forest Plan recommended 31 miles of the Sisquoc River be added to the Wild and Scenic River System. All 31 miles are within the San Rafael Wilderness.

Outstanding features of the Sisquoc river include a viewshed in a natural, undisturbed condition; diverse vegetation; steep dissected landform, pools and waterfalls which create unique visual focal points. The river also provides excellent opportunities for solitude and a variety of Wilderness-oriented activities. Designation of the Sisquoc River received strong public support and little opposition. As a result the recommendation for Wild and Scenic River status is affirmed in the Final Plan for 31 miles of the Sisquoc River.

Non-recommendation for Piru Creek

The Draft Plan did not recommend that Piru Creek be added to the Wild and Scenic River System. Piru Creek below Pyramid Reservoir is free-flowing only in the most marginal sense because it is subject to periodic releases, both scheduled and unscheduled, from Pyramid Reservoir. The resource values which characterize Piru Creek are better represented along nearby Sespe Creek, which preserves an excellent representative sample of a wild and free-flowing river. The upper 12 miles of Piru Creek is within the recommended boundary of the Sespe Wilderness and is thereby protected from water developments unless such developments were to receive Presidential approval.

Public comments related to the potential designation of Piru Creek as a Scenic River mentioned protection of free-flowing water in a natural setting. Concerns about lost future water development were also expressed.

The Plan that I am adopting does not change my original recommendation for Piru Creek. Wild and Scenic River designation for Piru Creek would add little, if any, protection and may attract additional users into the narrow canyon, placing them at risk from sudden increases in free-flowing water.

Further Evaluation for the Little Sur River

The Little Sur River was not listed as a candidate for the Wild and Scenic River System by the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. Therefore, it was not evaluated during the initial planning process. Approximately one-half of the Little Sur River within the National Forest boundary is on private or State land. That portion of the River on private land and State land is protected by the Little Sur Protected Water-

ways Management Plan. Most of the river in the Forest lies within the Ventana Wilderness.

The Little Sur Wild and Scenic River issue is inextricably tied to local control over development of mineral resources in the Little Sur watershed. Commenters in support of addition of the Little Sur River to the Wild and Scenic River System believe that more protection should be placed on the River and that this additional protection is consistent with local desires as expressed in the Monterey County Waterway Management Plan and the Local Coastal Plan. Opposition to Wild and Scenic River status focused on barriers that such status may place upon mineral development, particularly Granite Rock's plan to develop the limestone deposits on Pico Blanco. If the Little Sur River became a Wild or Scenic River, such designation would not affect existing perfected mining claims, such as the Granite Rock claim.

The Plan I am adopting commits Los Padres National Forest to work cooperatively with State and County governments to further evaluate the Wild and Scenic River potential of the Little Sur River. The safeguards already in place will provide sufficient protection of the Wild and Scenic River potential on the National Forest during this further evaluation period.

Off-Highway Vehicles

Analysis of the public comment revealed two substantive planning issues: the allocation of land to non-motorized use through both the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and designated OHV routes; and the Plan's failure to address the Statewide OHV Trails Plan. Two other OHV planning issues, the Johnston Ridge Trail and Garcia Ridge Trail, are treated in the discussion of Wilderness recommendations.

Allocation of Land to Motorized Use

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum recognizes a basic distinction between land appropriate for motorized use and land where such use is inappropriate. The Draft Plan allocates 60 percent of the Forest's land base to non-motorized use. On the remainder, OHV use is governed by Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines which limit use to designated or specially permitted roads and trails and which provide for natural resource protection. Although the Draft Plan did not specifically provide for additional OHV trails, some new trails are allowed.

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on Los Padres National Forest, as on most public land, is controversial. The issue is bounded on either side by organizations with differing positions. Many respondents asked for greater restrictions or a total ban on OHVs in the Forest. On the whole such comments were general or programmatic in nature. However, several dealt with specific problem trails and deficiencies in enforcement of existing regulations. Those in support of OHV use on Los Padres National Forest most frequently expressed a general concern over proliferation of areas closed to motorized use.

Although this Plan cannot resolve the fundamental conflict between user groups, the Plan I am adopting provides for a balance of non-motorized and motorized recreation. In comparison with the Draft Plan, the Final Plan provides a slight decrease in the land available for motorized recreation. However, the Final Plan provides the framework for development of additional routes where consistent with management direction and with public involvement and compliance with NEPA. Resolution of problems with specific OHV routes may be considered in subsequent analyses tiered from the Forest Plan.

Statewide OHV Trails Plan

The Draft Forest Plan does not address the Statewide Trails Plan. The Trails Plan exists in concept only and the State is not currently seeking to complete the planning process. The Trails Plan, however, is an important focus of concern for groups and individuals seeking to advance opportunities for OHV touring.

The Plan which I am adopting is modified to include a Forest-wide Standard and Guideline which directs Los Padres National Forest to cooperate with the State government, other agencies, and user groups to examine the feasibility and environmental effects of an OHV route between Gorman and Pozo. Additional management direction concerning OHV routes has been provided in the potentially involved management areas so as not to prematurely preclude the consideration of new routes. However, such direction does not necessarily mean that new routes will be developed in these management areas.

Mineral Development in the Coastal Zone

Minerals development in the Big Sur area's Coastal Zone is another of the more significant issues facing Los Padres National Forest. The focus of the issue is proposed development of a limestone quarry by Granite Rock Company on Pico Blanco. The issue also raises associated questions about other mineral development in the Big Sur Coastal Zone, including both locatable minerals (e.g. jade, gold) and such leasable minerals as oil and gas.

The Draft Plan did not directly address the Granite Rock development. This omission was of concern to many respondents. There are several areas that respondents felt needed discussion, namely the validity and potential of the limestone deposit, consistency with the Big Sur Local Coastal Plan, management direction specific to the Granite Rock

operation, and mechanisms for precluding mineral development.

There are two components of the issue that can be addressed in the Final Plan: (1) how to address development of minerals in the Pico Blanco area; and (2) whether National Forest lands within the Big Sur Coastal Zone should be withdrawn from mineral entry.

The Final Plan I am adopting incorporates additional direction in Management Area 48, which includes Pico Blanco. This direction recognizes minerals development as a legal but non-conforming activity which is inconsistent with the Management Area's visual and recreation emphasis and the Local Coastal Plan. The Final Plan also establishes a formal sequence of actions for evaluation of any future proposed development of the Granite Rock claims. When Granite Rock submits their next Plan of Operations, an environmental analysis will be undertaken. It is my hope that this can be a joint analysis with local government. The results of this analysis will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement. Local government will be fully consulted in the decision process.

In addition, the Final Plan I am adopting contains language intended to preclude new surface entry for minerals, excepting existing mineral rights, within the geographic boundary of the California Coastal Zone in Monterey County. In order to do this, the Plan recommends to the Department of Interior the withdrawal of reserved public domain lands from all new mineral entry in this area. Lease applications on acquired (non-public domain) lands within the Coastal Zone will not be recommended for approval by the Secretary of Agriculture. The Forest will recommend against leasing on any of this land pending withdrawal action by the Secretary of Interior.

Economic Efficiency of Alternatives

An estimate of Present Net Value (the difference between discounted benefits and discounted costs) was used to determine the most economically efficient alternative. Alternative I (Selected) has the second highest Present Net Value (PNV) of the alternatives considered in detail. Although Alternative VIII (High Market) has a higher PNV than Alternative I, in my judgment Alternative I provides a more balanced program and is more responsive to public concerns. The primary reason for the difference in PNV is a tradeoff between oil and gas and Wilderness. In actuality, the differences in PNV are slight among most alternatives because recreation use, by far the largest benefit provided by Los Padres, remains relatively constant among the alternatives. The only exception is Alternative V (National), which has a substantially lower PNV, the lowest budget, and provides the least goods and services.

Alternative	PNV (Millions of Dollars)
Alternative VIII (High Market)	2487
Alternative I (Selected)	2409
Alternative VII (RPA)	2405
Alternative IV (Wilderness Commodity)	2396
Alternative II (Present Management)	2371
Alternative VI (Non-Market)	2368
Alternative III (Amenity)	2320
Alternative V (National)	1945

Contribution to Production of Goods and Services

Los Padres National Forest must balance the production of commodities (e.g., grazing, oil and gas, fuelwood) with non-commodity goods and services (e.g., water, wildlife, scenery, Wilderness). Although the Final Plan I am adopting does not produce the highest level of any key good or service, it provides an excellent mix of goods and services while ensuring long term productivity of the land and its resources. In particular, I believe it is best due to its emphasis on responding to local and regional needs including wildfire reduction, enhanced wildlife habitat, additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System, protections for areas of special interest, and increased opportunities for general forest recreation. Alternatives II, IV, VII, and VIII provide higher levels of certain commodity products while some non-commodity goods and services are higher in Alternatives III and VI.

Some outputs in the Final Plan fall short of targets established through the RPA (Resources Planning Act) Program. Especially noticeable are large differences in water and timber. The RPA targets for these numbers were far too high.

Social and Economic Effects

Los Padres National Forest is situated in a densely populated region with a diverse economy. As a result, the marginal effects of the alternatives on economic variables (e.g., employment, income) will be slight and the social effects associated with Plan implementation will be subtle and gradual. The Forest enhances the quality of life for its local populations in many ways, particularly by providing scenic backdrops, remarkable vistas, and vast undeveloped lands. In many areas the Pacific Ocean complements the mountains of Los Padres to provide an unusual landscape in which to live. The Plan recognizes the local communities' desire to maintain their quality of life by placing a high priority on maintaining the visual quality of the Forest. Nevertheless, certain programs will have an influence on the social and economic environment, including prescribed burning, range management, and recreation.

Over one million people depend on the Forest to a large extent for their water needs. A systematic

program of prescribed burning can ensure that these needs are met by extending the useful life of reservoirs through sediment reduction. This will forestall the time when costly alternative sources must be developed. In addition, prescribed burning will greatly reduce the direct and indirect costs associated with wildfires. Most of the alternatives envision a substantial increase in prescribed burning, including Alternative I. Alternatives II and V envision somewhat smaller increases.

In many areas the land surrounding the Forest is occupied by relatively small ranching operations which are supported by grazing on the National Forest. These ranches represent a holdout in the trend towards large agribusiness ranching operations in California. Continuation of the economic viability of these permitted grazing operations is key to maintaining this traditional rural lifestyle. Alternative I approximates the current level of livestock grazing in the first decade and envisions a gradual increase toward the end of the 50-year planning horizon. Grazing is generally maintained at current levels during the first decade in Alternatives II, III, V, and VI; however, the level of grazing tapers off through the remainder of the planning horizon in each of these alternatives. Alternatives IV, VII, and VIII provide increased grazing opportunities throughout the planning horizon. Most of the rise in grazing results from utilizing increased forage following prescribed burning.

Preferences for wildland recreation activities vary widely among the southern California public ranging from highly developed to primitive experiences. Differing preferences can be traced to a number of factors including age, income, ethnicity, and physical handicap (see Section 4.17 of the FEIS). Currently less than 15% of the recreation use on Los Padres can be characterized as primitive. Trends in population dynamics, including an increase in the elderly and minority populations, suggest that this figure will decrease in the future. One of my concerns is that the designation of additional Wilderness may be inconsistent with these trends and may adversely affect the lifestyles of large segments of an increasingly diverse southern California population. All alternatives except Alternatives II and VIII recommend additional Wilderness, thereby reducing the opportunity for motorized recreation activities on Los Padres.

Environmental Effects

The following summarizes some key environmental effects which are expected to occur under each alternative. The magnitude, timing, and location of effects generally will differ for each alternative. These factors were all considered in arriving at the selected Alternative and Plan.

The Plan establishes direction and programs. With the exception of such land allocations as Wilderness, the Plan makes few actual, on-the-ground changes. The environmental effects of particular projects will be subjected to appropriate environmental analyses. Any management activity, under any alternative, could produce negative environmental impacts. The Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines were developed for incorporation into project planning so as to prevent such impacts or to minimize their consequences. Projects will be monitored, as shown in the Monitoring Plan (see Chapter V of the Plan), to ensure compliance with Forest management direction and applicable laws and regulations and to ensure that the Plan's direction is indeed appropriate.

The major source of induced environmental change, both negative and positive, is vegetation management through prescribed burning. All alternatives except Alternative II and V expect to burn 25,000 acres annually. The principal intent of prescribed burning is to manage fire as a major element of the ecosystem and to use it as a tool to achieve other management objectives. Since prescribed fire essentially replaces wildfire in the long term, the hazards of wildfire are progressively reduced. Moreover, since prescribed fire is less intense than wildfire there is an overall reduction in watershed and downstream damage. Water quality and soil productivity are enhanced over the long term. Prescribed burning will have a short term effect on visual quality but will ultimately increase the diversity of the landscape, a positive benefit. The prescribed burning program improves age and species diversity of vegetation and enhances wildlife habitat in the long run by breaking up large sections of even-age chaparral. In the short-term, prescribed fire will negatively affect plants and animals, although to a lesser extent than does wildfire. Air quality will also be affected in the short-term but such affects will be short-lived.

The Plan does not manage any forest land as suitable for commercial timber production. Emphasis for these lands is focused on maintaining a healthy, vigorous forest. Management for commercial timber production will not occur unless the emphasis changes in a future Forest Plan.

Although the Forest Plan does not make specific recommendations regarding oil and gas leasing, portions of the Forest remain available for that activity. Development of oil and gas leases will have environmental effects, including reduction of air and scenic quality as well as a variety of site-specific impacts from construction of facilities. The Plan contains procedures for evaluating impacts for oil and gas leasing, both cumulatively and at the individual lease level, and for developing leasing recommendations to the Bureau of Land Management. Subsequent environ-

mental analysis of lease applications will utilize these procedures and meet the requirements set forth in the Plan. Leasing recommendations include applying normal lease terms and special environmental protection measures, termed "stipulations", to individual leases.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

Alternative III (Amenity) is judged to be the environmentally preferable alternative. It provides the greatest amount of manageable Wilderness acreage. Outside Wilderness areas, enhancement of non-commodity (amenity) resources is emphasized while production of commodity resources remains at current levels. Opportunities to expand protection, evaluation, and enhancement of cultural resources are greatly expanded. Wildlife and fisheries habitat capability and visual resources are emphasized.

I did not select this Alternative for several reasons. First, it would shift the balance of recreation opportunity unacceptably toward primitive non-motorized recreation with nearly seventy-five percent of the Forest in primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized categories. Such an emphasis would unduly limit the future ability of the Forest to respond to the recreation needs of an increasingly older and diverse population. With this shift toward primitive recreation it is estimated that by the fourth decade, the Forest's ability to meet the demand for a wide variety of motorized types of recreation would be exceeded. This would likely lead to the overuse of some areas and a gradual shift toward a more urban-like setting for the more accessable portions of the Forest. Second, it would substantially restrict opportunities to develop lands with high/very high locatable and leasable mineral potential, including minerals of strategic importance to the nation. Finally, the allocation of 63% of Los Padres to Wilderness would drastically reduce the Forest's ability to respond to unforseen future technological and societal changes.

Compatibility with Other Public Agency Goals

The goals of other public agencies which could affect or be affected by management of Los Padres National Forest were considered early in the planning process. These goals were used to develop the alternatives in the Draft EIS. The Final EIS considered these goals plus additional agency concerns, such as water resource development of Sespe Creek and mineral development at Pico Blanco and Pine Mountain.

The public input to the Plan provided much needed information and solidified coordination efforts. Dialogue with other federal agencies, the State of California, local government, and interested publics, does not end with approval of this Plan. Indeed, Forest planning is an ongoing joint venture with the public. Continuing involvement by interested parties is critical to successful implementation of this Forest Plan. We encourage interested parties to participate in the implementation, monitoring, and updating of the Plan. As site specific planning is undertaken, there will be additional environmental analysis with public and agency involvement.

Similarly, this Plan was prepared with the intent of being fully consistent with Local Coastal Zone Management Plans and with the California Coastal Act of 1976 as directed by the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended. The Plan provides specific direction to assure that this is accomplished.

With the changes made as a result of the public and agency comments on the draft documents, there are currently no known conflicts with the formal plans of other Federal, State, County, or local agencies.

Summary of Reasons for Selecting Plan

The Forest Plan I am adopting has a high Net Public Benefit. It provides for allocation and use of the Forest's resources in a combination that will best meet the needs of the public. The Plan responds to the multiple-use mandate for National Forest System lands. Several points distinguish the Plan:

- The Plan meets demand for general forest recreation by emphasizing investment in the Forest's trail system.
- The Plan meets demand for developed recreation in heavy and moderate use areas.
- The Plan accommodates off-highway vehicle demand at a level commensurate with resource protection and potential for user conflicts.
- The Plan has a high level of economic efficiency.
- The Plan makes substantial and high quality contributions to the Nation's Wilderness Preservation System.
- The Plan makes substantial and high quality contributions to the Nation's Wild and Scenic River System.
- The Plan compares favorably to the environmentally preferable alternative (Alternative III) in key areas of environmental concern, including watershed protection, wildlife, and visual quality.
- The Plan recognizes areas of special environmental value through the establishment of five new Research Natural Areas, five new Botanical Areas, a 2955-acre Biosphere Reserve, a 2536-acre Geologic Area, and a 5772-acre Cultural Resource Area.
- The Plan provides for an increase in use of fire in the ecosystem, opening broad new opportunities for improving vegetative diversity and

wildlife habitat while reducing the damage of wildfire. The Plan includes provisions for prescribed burning in Wilderness Areas. Over time, sedimentation will be reduced and water yield will increase, improving both water storage and groundwater recharge.

- The Plan provides for management of cultural resources through programs of inventory, evaluation, physical protection, and monitoring. The inventory program stresses archeological surveys following wildfires and prescribed fire when access is least constrained. These programs will lead to an increase in knowledge of cultural history and preservation of the resource for future generations.
- The Plan provides for maintenance of visual quality generally, and maintenance and enhancement of the visual resources of the Big Sur coast and urban front areas, specifically.
- Although there is a net reduction in the land area available for mineral development, most of the areas of high and very high mineral potential, including strategic minerals, will generally remain available.

Los Padres National Forest and the public have produced a Plan which strives to provide a balance of uses and benefits for today's Forest users. For this, and all of the reasons cited above, I judge that compared to other alternatives, the Plan provides the best balance of resource allocations, and will provide the most equitable distribution of long-term public benefits.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION, AND MONITORING

The Plan will not be implemented sooner than 30 days after availability of the Plan, Final EIS, and this Record of Decision is noticed in the Federal Register. The time required to bring all activities into compliance with the Plan will vary depending on the type of project. As soon as practicable after approval of the Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the Plan.

Implementation of the Plan is guided by the Forest Purpose and Mission statement, the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines, and the direction established for individual Management Areas as described in Chapter 4 of the Plan. These instruments were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse effects. To the best of my knowledge, all the mitigation measures developed in this Plan will protect the Forest and its resources from significant adverse environmental effects.

The purposes of the monitoring program are (1) to evaluate whether Forest goals and objectives are being realized, (2) to determine how closely management requirements have been followed, (3) to assess the accuracy of predicted effects, and (4) to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the direction and mitigation measures in obtaining the desired and intended results. The results of monitoring will be used to measure the progress of Plan implementation. These results will also help to determine when Plan amendments or revisions are needed.

V. PLANNING RECORDS, AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Planning Records

Planning records contain the detailed information and data used in developing the Plan and Final EIS as required in 36 CFR 219.12.

All of the documentation detailing the Forest planning process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

Office of the Forest Supervisor
Los Padres National Forest
6144 Calle Real Goleta, CA 93117-2053
(805) 683-6711

These records are incorporated by reference into the Final EIS and Plan.

Amendments and Revisions

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of the Forest Plan at least every 15 years. The Plan may be revised sooner if physical conditions or demands on the land and resources have changed sufficiently to affect the overall goals or uses of Los Padres National Forest. When revising the Forest Plan, the procedures set forth in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed. These procedures include scoping, analysis of the management situation, development of alternatives, estimation of environmental effects, evaluation of alternatives, identification of a recommended alternative, documentation in an EIS and a draft Plan. The revised Plan must be approved by the Regional Forester following a formal public comment period.

During the implementation of the Forest Plan, various factors may trigger the need to change aspects of the Plan. In this event, based upon the advice and recommendation of the Forest's interdisciplinary team, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether the proposed changes are significant. The Forest Supervisor has the authority to make nonsignificant changes. However, all significant amend-

ments to the Forest Plan must be approved by the Regional Forester. The determination of significance shall be made in accordance with the requirements of 16 USC 1604(f), 36 CFR 219.10(e), and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), and pertinent sections of the Forest Service Manual and Handbook. The determination of significance or nonsignificance will be documented in a decision notice that is available for public review. No changes will be implemented prior to appropriate public notification. In the event of a significant amendment, procedures set forth in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed. Determinations of whether proposed changes are significant or nonsignificant are appealable under 36 CFR 211.18.

Administrative Review

The decision documented in this record is subject to appeal in accordance with provisions of 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

Paul F. Barker, Regional Forester Pacific Southwest Region, USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111

The notice of appeal, a statement of reasons to support the appeal, and any request for oral presentation must be filed within 45 days after the date of this decision.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. A stay of the decision must be requested. A stay may be requested at any time during the appeal period until a decision on the appeal is made by the Chief, USDA-Forest Service.

Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, mineral withdrawal, and Research Natural Area recommendations made in the Plan are not appealable under 36 CFR 211.18 as only Congress, the Secretary of the Interior, or the Chief of the Forest Service can make these decisions.

No decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document. Those projects identified in various parts of the Plan and Final EIS are included only to clarify discussions, illustrate a point, or to show that Forest Plan goals and objectives can be achieved. Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Forest Plan implementation after appropriate analysis and documentation meeting NEPA requirements. Parties dissatisified with a specific project may appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.

Paul F. Barker

PAUL F. BARKER
Regional Forester

MAR 22 1988